

*****For Immediate Release*****

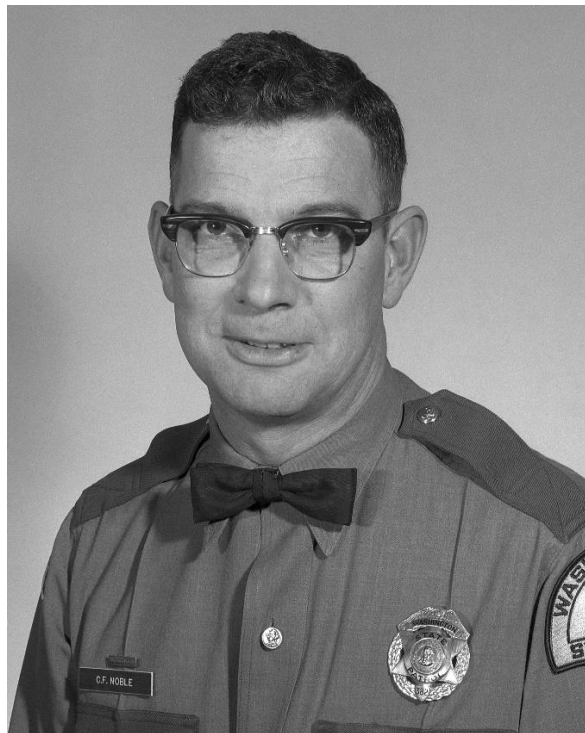
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February 5, 2021

Charles Frank Noble Jr.

**Commissioned – April 21, 1958
End of Watch – February 5, 1972**



The Washington State Patrol's 18th fallen officer, Trooper Charles Frank Noble Jr., was killed in the line of duty after unexpectedly coming across a burglary suspect during a traffic stop on February 5, 1972 – an incident that sparked controversy and the overhauling of a new state inmate furlough program.

Frank Noble was 42 years old at the time of his death. A proud father of six children, he was Korean War veteran, and had served in WSP for 14 years. While history recalls his death in terms of the political firestorm that ensued, the Washington State Patrol honors his life, service, sacrifice, and friendship. We remember...

BIO

Charles Frank Noble Jr., was born on Dec. 10, 1929, in Sacramento, Calif., to Charles Frank Noble Sr. and Effie Maye Hayes. He spent his young life attending schools in California, Oregon and Washington State, graduating from Vancouver High School in 1948.

Two years after receiving his diploma, Noble enlisted in the United States Navy. He first enlisted on Sept. 25, 1950 and served during the Korean War. It was December of that following year when he married his first wife, Betty J. Gill. Noble re-enlisted with the Navy on July 8, 1954. After his tour was complete, he chose to continue his education by taking courses at Clark College. He also worked as an electrician's apprentice and on the railroad. Throughout it all, his desire to serve his community never dwindled.

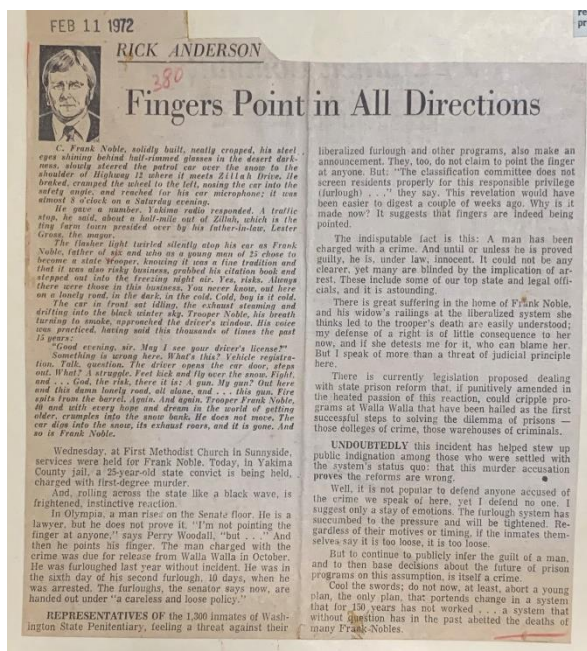
Noble joined the Washington State Patrol on Nov. 4, 1957, initially as a driver's license examiner in Vancouver. He graduated with the 27th Trooper Cadet Class and was commissioned April 21, 1958, assigned to Renton. Trooper Noble transferred to Sunnyside in 1969.

Following a divorce, he married his second wife, registered nurse Marie Ruth Hunt (Myrick), in July 1969. Trooper Noble was the proud father of six children, including two stepsons.

END OF WATCH

Trooper Frank Noble's life of service to his family, state and country was cut short on Saturday evening, February 5, 1972. Earlier, a new state furlough program was created to help ease inmate rehabilitation during their transition back to society. Trooper Noble inadvertently came across one such furloughed inmate, Robert Lee Clark of Toppenish, while on speed enforcement duty near Zillah. The encounter would prove fatal.

Noble initiated a traffic stop and had taken the driver to the back of his patrol vehicle. As he returned to contact Clark, the passenger, he was met by gunfire. Trooper Noble was struck three times and died of his injuries.



AFTERMATH

Clark was taken into custody a short time later for murder. He had robbed a convenience store earlier that day and was also on furlough from the state penitentiary for a vehicle theft conviction in 1970.

Noble's slaying sparked criticism of the state furlough program. His widow, Marie, wrote an open letter to then Governor Dan Evans criticizing him for showing support of the program, even after her husband's death, writing "Are you saying Trooper Noble's death is inconsequential to this program?"

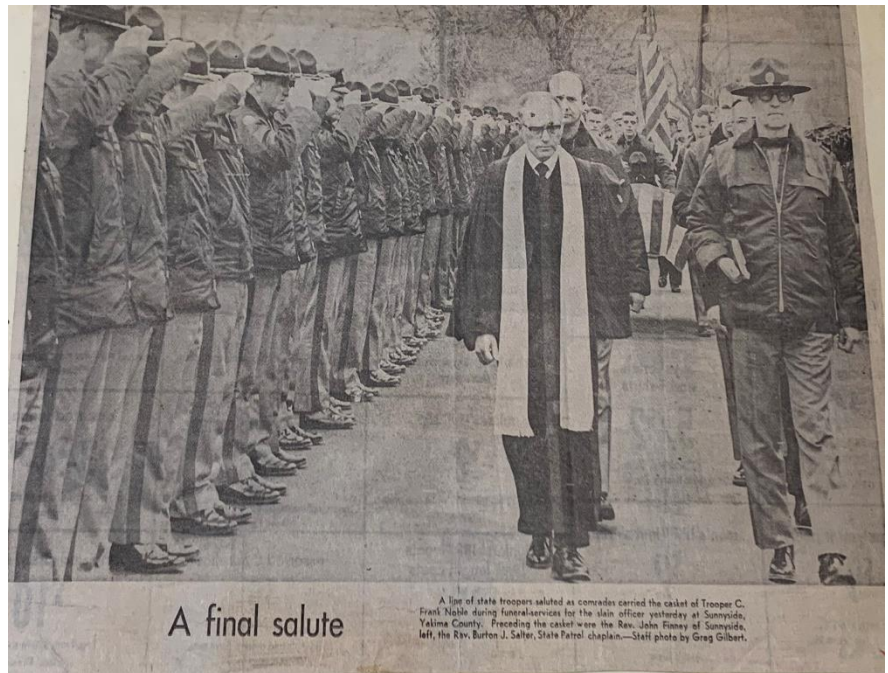
WSP Chief O. C. Furseth also spoke out regarding the furlough program, calling for a total review and reevaluation. This eventually led to Washington State Senate Resolution 1972-46, approving a study of the program. Governor Evans, who met with the slain trooper's widow and attended his funeral, later tightened the furlough conditions.

Trooper Noble was survived by his wife and 6 children.

In May of 1988, he was posthumously awarded the Washington Law Enforcement Medal of Honor.

Newspaper reporter Duane Dozier wrote of the burial service at the United Methodist Church in Sunnyside, WA, *"The grave itself was backdropped by a row of evergreens, which stand as if at attention and on guard over the resting place of Trooper Noble."*

The evergreens of a half century ago may no longer stand so tall but the Washington State Patrol still stands at attention in memory of this good man, this good father, and the good and true servant of the people. We will not forget...



Seattle Times Photo by Greg Gilbert

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Washington State Trooper Charles Frank Noble Jr.
End of Watch – February 5, 1972
Gone But Never Forgotten